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ABSTRACT

People continue to define themselves, their lifestyles, and their beliefs through their neighborhoods--their turf. In studying the history of New York City neighborhoods, it is important to consider the developmental trends and constraints (geography, economic structure, transportation, and technological advances) that contributed to the growth of the city's environment. The cycle of growth, decline, and rebirth of neighborhoods is examined in each of the city's five boroughs--Manhattan, Brooklyn, the Bronx, Queens, and Staten Island. Growing from a Dutch settlement on Manhattan Island, the city's economic base was and still is water-oriented. Economic and demographic trends fostered changes in Manhattan neighborhoods that altered the nature of the community. In recent years, young professionals have returned to revitalize Manhattan neighborhoods. Brooklyn was established by Dutch settlers in 1636 and developed as an autonomous city until 1814, when regular steam ferry service with Manhattan was established. The Brooklyn Bridge, which opened in 1883, completed the link between Manhattan and Brooklyn. With its devastated tenements, suburban riverfront mansions, seaside cottages, and massive housing superblocks, the Bronx typifies the rapid succession of growth and decline experienced throughout New York City. Queens remains a borough of towns, villages, and real estate developments and, as it is newer, is more scattered and less troubled than the other boroughs. Staten Island is geographically separated from the rest of the city but has experienced much growth since the 1964 opening of the Verrazano Narrows Bridge. The document contains numerous black and white photographs, lithographs, and other illustrative materials. (SM)

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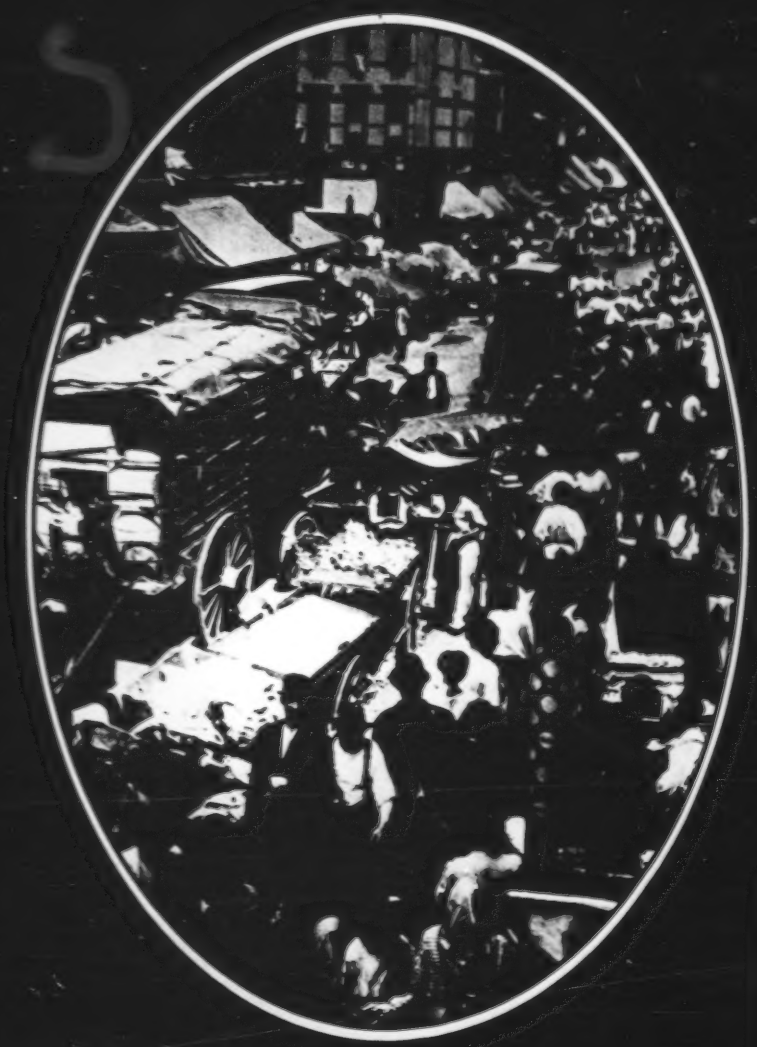
THE FRAGILITY OF TURF

THE NEIGHBORHOODS OF NEW YORK CITY



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The Fragility of Turf
The Neighborhoods of New York City

by Michael Winkleman

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About the Author

A journalist who lives in the Park Slope neighborhood of Brooklyn, Michael Winkleman is former managing editor of *New York Affairs* and contributing editor of *Urban Design*.

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NEIGHBORHOODS:
AN INTRODUCTION

In looking at neighborhoods, the concept of "turf" – the defensible territory residents cling to as their own – is critical to consider. Mapping out that territory and so defining personal space is an important element of individual fulfillment in any environment. As neighborhoods are defined by the people who live in them, so do people define themselves by where they live. In the small town, where little changes over the years, where families can trace their roots back for generations in the same house and on the same block, turf sometimes appears to be constant. But when the pressures accompanying growth, modernization, and changing social values finally creep in, the inhabitants regroup and cling to their land – or they move on and begin to define another territory as their own.

In an environment as dynamic and fluid as that of New York City, the constancy of turf is more difficult to grasp. In its early years, the city was continually growing, expanding, pushing forward, gobbling up neighborhoods, suburbs, and small towns in its path, urbanizing them, changing the built environment, altering the population, and redefining land use. In recent times, as the city declined, with the limits of its influence pushing further and further outside of its actual jurisdiction, the same patterns held true. Neighborhoods continued to be overturned and gobbled up, but this time the change was brought on by decay and disinvestment, by abandonment and ruin, and by the process of deurbanization.

Today there is talk of an urban renaissance. Fueled by the energy crisis and by a disenchantment with the suburban option, there has been a noticeable, if not overwhelming, urban resurgence. And with this new growth comes new neighborhood change, new groups of invaders, and new definitions of residential turf. So the neighborhood, as a perceived and as an exciting organism, is a fragile thing. Its existence is fleeting, hard to hold onto, difficult even to define.

This is the story of neighborhoods in a place where the fragility of the neighborhood structure is most evident – New York City. New York City is a place where the forces of development, of decline, and or rebirth are exaggerated far beyond the national mean in terms of scope, scale, and significance. New York City's neighborhoods developed under different circumstances. Some were residential outposts just beyond the city's commercial limits. Some were small urban centers or vacation spots and were absorbed into the larger city as growth proceeded. Others began as railroad suburbs that were developed when advancements in transportation, such as bridges, transit systems, and highways, made them accessible and convenient. Some were the dreams – or meal tickets – of real estate developers and took the form of rows of tract houses, recreations of European villages, or planned communities built with

Utopia in mind (a highway through Queens even bears that name). Still others were simply the conglomeration of makeshift structures, built to house those who worked in nearby industry, which somehow constituted a community and which served as housing, well beyond intended lifetimes.

What defined such areas as neighborhoods was and remains as varied as the neighborhoods themselves. Often neighborhoods had definite edges: rivers, major thoroughfares, elevated transit lines, changes in the street grid, and parkland. Sometimes variations in architecture or building style defined the change. Quite often, however, a boundary was an arbitrary distinction determined by settlement patterns – where the rich lived, where the Swedes lived, where the Jews lived, where the blacks lived. But few of these neighborhoods lasted very long in their original form. Some have been transformed completely. Buildings have been demolished and replaced, vacant lots filled in, streets widened, and land masses enlarged by landfill. Sometimes only the occasional remaining structure – the old lamp post, the cobblestones pushing through the potholes – remains as a pentimento of what once existed.

Sometimes the basic form of the neighborhood does remain. And its evolution is instead reflected in a reuse of existing structures, as the interiors of large mansions are divided into apartments or rooming houses in response to economic exigencies, or as factory lofts are converted into dwelling places to meet changing industrial and residential demands. Sometimes the change is reflected in building surfaces refinished in aluminum siding, permastone, or a new approximation of the original brownstone. But more often, neighborhoods remain as structures only. Often abandoned, vandalized, or debilitated, they are mere skeletons bearing testament to a sometime glorious but often overrated past.

The dynamism of change in New York City and the more general technological and social advancements that have paralleled it in other parts of the nation have spared few neighborhoods. A few, though, have held out. Some can boast four generations of residents who all live within a four-block radius; others have merchants who have done business for 50 years in the same location – and who still live in the area themselves. Nonetheless, few neighborhoods have been able to persist unchanged for more than 10 or 15 years. A decade may be spent resisting change, and another 10 may pass mourning the neighborhood's demise. But then, another definition of the turf surfaces, cast in a new image, with another group to serve. In some neighborhoods, a part of the old image lives on, romanticized in literature and popularized in the media. More often than not, though, the image is erroneous. Not only is it not the way it is anymore, but it might not even be the way it ever was.

Still the neighborhood remains an important concept to New Yorkers, even though it is questionable by definition and its persistence may be a myth. Through their neighborhood – their turf – people continue to define themselves, their lifestyles, their beliefs, their roots, their beings.

In looking at the history of New York neighborhood development and change, it is important to consider the developmental trends and constraints (geography, economic structure, transportation and technological advances, patterns of immigration) which contributed to the growth of the city's built environment. Because the nature of growth, decline, and rebirth of neighborhoods has been relatively different in each of the city's five boroughs, each borough deserves individual examination. Drawing on those examinations, with the evolution of particular neighborhoods traced over time, some trends emerge from the diversity, illustrating the fragility of turf in New York City.

MANHATTAN

There is no single place where it all began. Several successful settlements were made within the territory that comprises Greater New York City. The forerunner of New York City itself was a small Dutch settlement at the tip of Manhattan Island called New Amsterdam. Its buildings and residents were crowded together below a defensive palisade at today's Wall Street. There, about 800 souls lived in gabled-roofed buildings and engaged in business mainly oriented to port and commerce trade. To the north, settlers built homes in what would later be called Greenwich Village, farmed their lands in the Haarlem fields, or developed estates overlooking the East River tributary. At the outset, these settlements maintained their independence, largely because journeys between towns took days to accomplish. The travel distance between towns initiated the growth of many settlements as food and lodging stopovers along the roads. With the English conquest in 1664, New Amsterdam was renamed New York. The population of Manhattan Island continued to grow, and New York received its city charter from Governor Thomas Dongan in 1686. But the success of the New York venture was too overwhelming to be contained within its original tightly defined borders.

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, the northern push of settlers had begun in earnest and continued, with certain characteristics that were continuously repeated, until there was no more land to take over. The initial push was residential. Villagers looking for more space developed land just north of the limits of settlement and built new homes. Then, when the city needed more land to house its expanding stores and offices, it too pushed north, right into the only recently established residential neighborhoods – filling in vacant land, displacing residents, and changing the neighborhood character. Only those residents who were financially unable to move on to greener pastures in the north stayed behind. The others repeated the pattern once again, building new houses in northern areas, only to be enveloped by the surging city once again just a few years later.

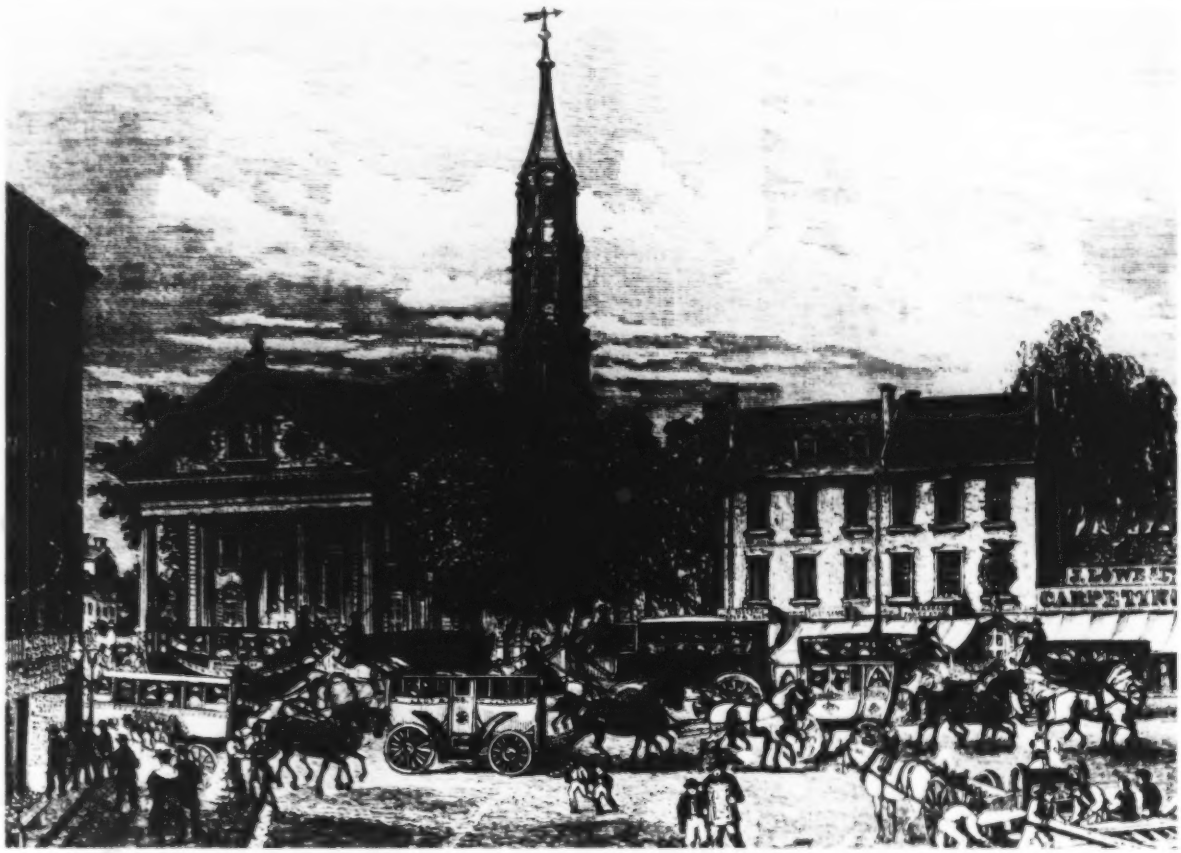
The northward push worked its way up Broadway, which was the central ridge of the island and the major road toward Albany. After the city fathers approved the gridiron street plan for the island in 1811, the angular cut of Broadway permitted the natural development of nodes at its intersections with the proposed north-south avenues. These nodes were natural sites for development. In fact, each crest of the wave rested, before pushing on, at a Broadway node.

Natural features in the path of growth had to be eliminated. About 1800, enterprising developers confronted with a hill rising to 600 feet just south of the village of Greenwich and north of the canal at Canal Street, found it to their advantage to level off the top of the hill and thus freed the land below for residential use. The earth moved from the hill was used to fill in an

adjacent mosquito-infested swamp which was hindering development east of the hill and north of the canal. Once the hill was smoothed down and the swamp filled in, development of the land was rapid. The former hillside area accommodated the expansion of Greenwich Village. The swampland, too, was developed rapidly and it became the most populous residential district in New York by 1805.

along as a red light district until industrialists discovered it in the 1850s. At that time, elaborately detailed cast iron structures rose along its streets, and a thriving industrial climate existed well into the twentieth century.

More than many cities, New York's development was preordained by its geography. While hills could be



Courtesy The Bettman Archive

"The Old Broadway Stages," an 1831 lithograph.

But this residential usage was short-lived. By the 1830s, commercial development was eating up living space in this neighborhood, then called the Eighth Ward. Residents had moved north, and retailers had built huge emporiums where houses once stood. However, within 20 years, commercial development had again pushed north, this time toward 14th Street, leaving Eighth Ward stores abandoned. The area hobbled

leveled and swamps filled in, altering land conditions to expedite development, the reality of a narrow island surrounded by wide and navigable waterways leading out to the ocean hardly could be changed. Indeed, it was New York's reason for being. The economic base of the city was water-oriented commerce. As the Industrial Revolution progressed, access to and use of waterways up and down the riverfronts of the island, further

from the heart of the central business district, were critical to the city's success. Residential development followed these constraints. High income neighborhoods were built hugging the island's spine, away from the industry of the waterfront, clustering around the Broadway nodes (until pushed north by commerce), filling in large old estates, or, later facing Central Park at the center of the island.

Reinforcing this pattern of high income development was the tenement housing built near the waterfront for workers who were employed by the waterfront industry. On the East Side, the Third Avenue Elevated Transit Line was built in 1878 and separated the teeming "Gashouse District" slums along the riverfront from the solid upper class neighborhoods of Gramercy Park and Murray Hill. On the West Side, the opening of the Hudson River Railroad in 1851 accelerated industrial growth along the Hudson. The neighborhoods that grew amidst the worker tenements drastically changed the serenity of the Chelsea development and pushed black settlers out of what was to become the notorious "Hell's Kitchen" neighborhood.

Courtesy The Bettman Archive

Fifth Avenue from 42nd St., 1880.

Such rampant growth inspired real estate speculation. Guessing what area is going to be developed next has always been a major part of the real estate game. Some of the development occurred with population movements of the time – Chelsea, Gramercy Park, Murray Hill, and the Eighth Ward. But some development was bolder and more of a gamble. For example, Henry J. Hardenbergh's Dakota apartment house, built at 72nd Street and Central Park West in 1884, was so far from the settled part of the island that it took its name from the popular derisive cry that it was "so far away, it might as well be in the Dakotas!" But the Dakota worked, and soon the surrounding lots were occupied. A neighborhood developed for which the Dakota had set the stage and tone – high-rise, prestigious apartment houses along the park flanked by elaborate, expensive townhouses on the side streets. True to form, however, much of the western fringe of this area followed the riverfront development patterns of southern Manhattan. The railroad in 1851, the elevated train in 1871, and the industrial growth that accompanied them caused the West Side to grow as a low-income neighborhood characterized by tenements.

Other speculative moves were not so successful. Seeing the growth of the townhouse market through the Upper East Side along Fifth Avenue and west of the German Yorkville area, some developers felt it was only a matter of time before the northward progression began again and the Harlem frontier, already dotted with expensive homes near the Harlem River Railroad line, would be further invaded by middle-class forces. In anticipation, they built blocks of brownstones and rows of apartment houses. But their guess proved wrong. The finished townhouses did not sell at all. And, the apartments went unrented. Rather than leave the houses sitting vacant until the move north finally began, the developers subdivided the buildings and rented the apartments out to the only group of people for whom these houses were in demand – blacks who then were being displaced by commercial construction at Herald Square. Finding this housing obtainable but expensive, the new Harlem residents had to skimp to pay the rent. To further divide the cost, they crowded more friends and relatives into their apartments than the dwellings had been meant to house. The owners of the buildings, who saw their hopes for profit and further development dashed in Harlem, were not very concerned with maintenance. Victimized by crowding and disrepair, the buildings deteriorated, setting a tone for the area that precluded any other sort of future growth.

Neighborhoods in a city so explosively expansive must be transitional. The residential days of areas in the path of commercial growth were always numbered. They were merely the "next frontier" and would be displaced by the next wave of expansion. However, the lower income neighborhoods that grew around industry were no more permanent. While their buildings would remain, the residents, usually newly arrived, upwardly

mobile immigrants, would move on to greener pastures as soon as they could. These neighborhoods served as staging grounds – places to become established, to live near one's own kind while building the resources to move on, thereby freeing up the housing for the next group off the boat.

For example, the area known as the Lower East Side was first inhabited by Irish who arrived during the Irish potato famine of the 1840s. As the Irish moved uptown and into Brooklyn and the Bronx, the Lower East Side housed Italians and, later, Jews. Today, the area is largely Hispanic. Farther north, the Gashouse District provides a similar example. Stretching along and inland from the East River from about 14th to 23rd Streets, this neighborhood was once Irish, later German, and then settled by Jews and other Eastern Europeans. During the late 1940s, the tenements that characterized this district were razed and replaced with the highrise, building-in-the-park style, middle-income developments called Peter Cooper Village and Stuyvesant Town. When these ethnic groups moved up and out,

The Lower East Side (pictured in these photographs) is a neighborhood that has long served as a staging ground where new groups of immigrants established themselves before moving on. The Irish, Italians, Jews, and Hispanics have all lived here.

Courtesy The Bettman Archive

Rivington Street in the early 1900's.

Courtesy The Bettman Archive

"Mulberry Bend" by Jacob Riis.

Courtesy New York State Department of Commerce

A recent view of Orchard Street.

they sometimes moved to housing vacated by people of higher means who had moved on to newer homes (a process urban planners call the "trickle-down" theory). More often, however, these newly middle-income groups moved directly to new developments in the city's other boroughs or to the suburbs.

Many Manhattan neighborhoods have retained their ethnic flavor long after most of the members of the ethnic group have left. To some extent, this has been fed by the nostalgia brought on by the demolition of so many neighborhoods during the years of urban renewal. Their replacement with mile after mile of anthill-like, brick apartment houses has resulted in a scarcity of old-style ethnic neighborhoods in Manhattan. Rejuvenating a neighborhood's ethnic feeling has been fanned by the fires of gentrification, the much-heralded, back-to-the-city movement that has flourished over the last 10 years. Looking for entertainment and for the type of vitality only a cosmopolitan and multiethnic urban center can provide, city residents (and visitors) now are seeking to preserve and monumentalize the ethnic pockets that do remain. Thus, the Jewishness of Orchard Street is cherished, despite the area's increasing Spanish influence. And, the Little Italy area – now largely Chinese and always considerably smaller than many other Italian districts in New York – still is touted as the place to partake of Italian culture and to enjoy Italian food and street fairs.

This ethnic landmarking is made possible largely by the propensity of merchants to keep their businesses in an area long after they, and most of their neighbors, have moved away. Today's Little Italy still is lined with Italian restaurants. In fact, their number is increasing yearly because of interest in historic preservation of this area. Similarly, the Jewish delis, bakeries, pickle works, and wholesale garment shops around Orchard Street

Courtesy New York State Department of Commerce

A 1970's festival in Little Italy.

draw enormous crowds seeking to recapture the glamorized atmosphere of their own and other people's ancestors.

Ethnicity is not dead in Manhattan. It has merely changed. The old neighborhood is not what it used to be; it has evolved into something else. Nothing in New York stands still for long. Most of the changes that have taken place are dictated by trends and forces over which a city like New York can have only limited control. National and international economic conditions, political developments at home and abroad, and changes in legislation, such as immigration laws, impose pressures on New York that smaller, less visible, less critical cities – and their neighborhoods – may not feel in the same proportions.

During the early 1960s, Chinatown, for example, had become a faded neighborhood. Originally built to house Irish and German immigrants, this neighborhood is composed primarily of tenement structures on narrow, crowded, winding streets centered around Mott Street south of Canal. A few earlier arrivals preceded a large influx of Chinese from 1875 to 1882, when the Chinese Exclusion Act closed the door to new immigration. Chinese culture thrived in the Mott Street area for half a century. By 1960, though, upward mobility had carried established residents out of the area, and Chinatown's population declined. Those Chinese who remained were older, retired couples, and single, childless men. Chinatown was considered a declining community.

However, the Federal government changed its immigration laws in 1965 and opened its doors to new Chinese immigration. Today, New York's Chinatown, the largest Chinese settlement in America, is overwhelmingly overcrowded. In some senses the neighborhood is thriving. New restaurants (a major local business and by far the most significant tourist attraction) continue to open. Local markets, serving community residents as well as outsiders who savor the products found only in this part of town, are doing well. By other indices, though, the neighborhood is unhealthy. Many of its residents are ill-housed and underemployed. Foreign investment – primarily by Hong Kong and Taiwanese businessmen who fear for their finances in the politically unstable climates of their homelands – has been out of line with value. Chinatown real estate has become among the most expensive in town. Thus, the cost of assembling property for rehabilitation (which itself is virtually impossible given the deteriorated state of the structures) or demolition is all but prohibitive. As a result, except for the recently constructed, middle-income, subsidized, high-rises called Confucius Plaza and Chatham Towers, most of the housing is substandard. Unschooled in American language and culture and unemployable outside Chinatown, most of the residents work in local restaurants or in nearby garment sweatshops for low wages and with little hope for a different life in the future.

Courtesy New York State Department of Commerce

Although its real estate is among the most expensive in town, Chinatown's residents are mostly poor, working in low paying jobs in local restaurants and garment sweatshops.

To accommodate its swelling population, Chinatown has expanded beyond its traditional borders into neighboring Little Italy and east into the historically Jewish Lower East Side. This move has been facilitated by changes in local populations, particularly in Little Italy, where the resident Italian population is aging, and its size diminishing as younger residents leave the community. Threatened by what they view as a foreign invasion, the Italians have sought to protect their turf. Lobbying city agencies through historic designation, urban design efforts, and economic development plans, they have created a neighborhood preservation and development group, the Little Italy Restoration Association (LIRA), to protect their neighborhood's ethnic identity. In reaction, the Chinese have put their own

political clout to work. The resounding chords have not been harmonious. But the traditional image of Chinatown still remains strong. The casual observer or urban tourist cannot see below the surface. Broken only occasionally by media reports of Chinese gang violence, this veneer is exotic, pretty, and appealing.

Just as Germans, Irish, Italians, and Eastern European Jews constituted the majority of New York City's immigrants before the twentieth century, Asians and Hispanics are the city's main immigrant groups today. The growing Hispanic population of New York is concentrated in several places in Manhattan (as well as throughout the other boroughs) and is composed of immigrants from several Caribbean, Central American, and South American nations. As was the case with preceding immigrant groups, Hispanic neighborhoods are composed of people from particular islands or countries. Often, the origin of these residents is even more specific than national origin, since familiarity, and perceived congeniality, are factors of turf. In New York City, former residents of particular towns have tended to reside near each other in their new land.

The Puerto Ricans, who arrived in New York in large numbers after the end of World War II (but who now exhibit more of a tendency to return to Puerto Rico than to remain here), are the largest of the Hispanic groups. The other sizable Manhattan-based enclave is Cuban, generally composed of refugees from the 1959 revolution, who live primarily in a formerly German-Jewish section of Washington Heights. Perhaps they have chosen Washington Heights because of previous Cuban settlement there or because the style of this very commercial, geographically confined and densely populated neighborhood gave them the opportunity to prosper as merchants. This was important because they often found it difficult to find employment in the occupation or profession in which they had been trained.

Economic and demographic trends have fostered other changes in Manhattan neighborhoods that have altered the nature of the community and broken down barriers of turf. With the island's available acreage completely developed and interurban migration no longer rampant, a new "immigrant" group is expanding its Manhattan base and displacing other groups in established neighborhoods. While this group is not easily classified, it is commonly referred to as "the gentry."

Typically, members of the gentry are middle to upper-middle class (in education and aspirations if not in income), young (the children of the baby boom, now come of age), engaged in professional careers, and living in non-traditional social arrangements (as singles, unmarried couples, childless couples, homosexual couples). Often, they are the returned children of former city neighborhood residents who fled to the suburbs – or to suburban neighborhoods in the outer boroughs. In recent years, the gentry have poured into established, middle-class Manhattan neighborhoods and, overflowing their boundaries, now have pushed into adjacent areas. The rehabilitation or "upgrading" of these adjacent neighborhoods often is accomplished through the displacement of lower income residents who then move on to other areas and bring with them neighborhood change. By this process of "reverse filtration," the area around Columbus Avenue between about 66th and 79th Streets, not long ago a multi-ethnic service street lined with small groceries, hardware stores, and laundries, has been turned into a chic, gentrified boulevard. The bodegas and service shops have given way to fancy boutiques, antique furniture stores, and expensive restaurants where quiche is the favorite native food. The tenements in the area have been gutted and converted into small, high rent, studio apartments. In addition, the brownstones on the side streets have escalated in value beyond the means of even the gentry.

While this type of upgrading is perhaps a new phenomenon, the search for a stable, middle-class population has a long history. The city razed the tenements of the East River Gashouse district during the mid-1940s and sold the land at cost to the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. This made possible the construction of the middle-income communities of Stuyvesant Town and Peter Cooper Village for rental to returning servicemen. In a time of severe housing shortage, when the suburban option was being encouraged by Federal policy, the Metropolitan Life developments provided a viable, affordable, and attractive urban alternative. Built in the tradition of Le Corbusier's "buildings-in-a-park" philosophy, the buildings turned their backs on the surrounding low-income areas and were clustered around central parks, paths, and playgrounds. Consequently, little spillover upgrading took place. Not until the Third Avenue elevated train was demolished in 1955 did the neighborhood immediately west of the Metropolitan Life developments begin to change. But though the developments were insular, their insularity was an advantage to their residents as they created a strong sense of community and neighborhood identification.

Courtesy New York State Department of Commerce

Little Italy is still valued as *the* place to enjoy Italian food, though its population today is largely Chinese.

In a similar "buildings-in-a-park" fashion, the Penn Station South Houses were built in 1962 by the International Ladies Garment Workers Union on cleared slumland in Chelsea. Originally, these co-op apartments were sold only to union members. But time and apartment resales have changed that. Today, even without homogeneity of occupation, the sense of community remains strong. The apartments remain desirable and the development's waiting list is at least seven years long. Penn Station South Houses are not as closed off as are Stuyvesant Town and Peter Cooper Village. The streets, which wind like suburbia amidst the grid, are open to local traffic. As a result, the development has served as a stabilizing anchor when Chelsea was declining. It remains an integral part of the community as Chelsea enters a renaissance created by gentrification.

Large-scale redevelopment of this sort was common during the 1950s and 1960s, the era of urban renewal. While the ostensible goals of urban renewal were to provide better quality housing for urban residents, the actual experience in Manhattan and other places was somewhat different. Instead, urban renewal often became, as its critics have charged, "urban removal." In places like Chelsea, Lincoln Square, Columbus Circle, and Kips Bay, thousands of low-income, generally black or ethnic residents were evicted and relocated – often haphazardly, sometimes to areas that were about to be designated for clearance. When those neighborhoods were razed, the tenements were replaced with housing for the middle class and with large institutions (Lincoln Center, the Coliseum) that were not necessarily intended for use by neighborhood residents. In many respects, these products of urban renewal have opened the way for gentrification. Once the Lincoln Square area lost its West Side Story aura (the film was shot there) and became a middle-class area, other parts of the adjacent Upper West Side could change, albeit more slowly and with more subtlety. Some who complain about the effects of gentrification and mourn the

loss of its essential flavor say the community has become but an indistinguishable extension of the toney Upper East Side. But turf is fragile and neighborhoods are fleeting. Changes on the Upper West Side are merely reflections of general trends – in economics, immigration patterns, and lifestyles – that are inherent to New York and observable nationwide.

Urban renewal and urban renewal-style neighborhood rehabilitation did not always eliminate the low-income residents. Particularly in Harlem and on the Lower East Side, demolished tenements were replaced with high-rise, subsidized project housing especially intended for the displaced, original residents. Whether these newer structures have improved the neighborhoods in which they were built is debatable. While housing conditions are somewhat better, the fabric of the neighborhoods themselves often has been ripped beyond repair. Prior to renewal, these communities were made up of low-rise and crumbling tenements and rowhouses. Buildings of this scale instilled a sense of neighborhood that the highrises have not duplicated. They provided stoops to sit on, streets to play on, and windows from which mothers could easily watch and supervise their children at play. General living conditions may have been substandard, but the sense of identity, of turf, was strong. Residents could define their boundaries and could identify with their surroundings. If defense of those boundaries sometimes erupted in violence and gang warfare (a less subtle defense of turf perhaps than the exclusionary zoning and racial/ethnic steering by realtors that have preserved and protected the boundaries of other, middle-income city neighborhoods), still there was a sense of place and of belonging. This sense of belonging generally is absent in the highrise towers that have replaced the Harlem and Lower East Side tenements. The alienation the residents feel from their surroundings is evident in the rapid deterioration many of these structures have experienced.

Though they were built in essentially the same "buildings-in-the-park" arrangement that characterized the middle-income Metropolitan Life and ILGWU developments, the projects have not proved to be nearly as successful in low-income neighborhoods. Parkland, playgrounds, lobbies, and elevators are unkempt and dangerous, and mothers resent not being able to see their children at play. The boundaries and limits of neighborhood turf are difficult to grasp. Other factors also plague neighborhoods like Harlem and cause neighborhood deterioration. Residents live at the poverty level; delivery of public services is inadequate; buildings fall into disrepair. Social alienation is generally apparent. The disappearance of and changes in turf identification underline many social problems. Although some recent attempts at neighborhood recreation in low-income areas, most notably Phipps Houses in the East Midtown/Bellevue South area off Second Avenue, have been successful, most are poorly planned, island-like, and problem ridden.

Neighborhood change in Manhattan has not been limited to residential areas. Just as commercial pressures pushed residential neighborhoods out of the way, so have new residential pressures created housing in areas that previously had been reserved to commercial and industrial use. Propelled by a housing shortage and aided by generous tax incentives, today's urban pioneers, and the developers who build for them, have created new neighborhoods in SoHo, once a textile center and the former Eighth Ward; in Tribeca, once the city's food distribution center; and along Broadway and Park Avenue South above and below Union Square, until recently just an office and loft warehouse district. Other residential neighborhoods have sprung up as buildings have been converted in the Garment Center, the Flower District, Herald Square, Fifth Avenue, and the Wall Street financial area.

In residential New York City, Manhattan is of course the most volatile of areas. The pressures there are greatest, the housing densest, and the neighborhoods in most constant flux. To some extent, Manhattan is a bellwether for other boroughs and other cities. But, largely, it is unique.

BROOKLYN

Throughout its history and over its 79 square miles, Brooklyn has been a city in its own right, a collection of towns and villages, a suburban oasis for New York's commuting elite, a step up the ladder for immigrant groups, an oceanfront resort, a shipping capital, a center of industry, a cultural mecca, a teeming slum, and the front-runner of urban rebirth. Even more than Manhattan – where developmental pressures have often masked real historical trends – Brooklyn and its neighborhoods have foretold our national tale of urban birth and decline. And, in more recent days, this borough of homes and churches has blazed a path towards some measure of an urban renaissance.

In contrast to the early, complete absorption of Manhattan into the city of New York, the Kings County communities of Brooklyn City, Flatbush, New Utrecht, Gravesend, and Flatlands retained their respective autonomies until just before the entire county's inclusion in the Greater City of New York in 1898. And, while Manhattan's development and concomitant neighborhood change was determined by geographical restrictions and by the expanding needs of the central business district, the development and decline of Brooklyn was facilitated by improvements and changes in transportation technology.

After purchasing land near the Gowanus Bay from the Mohawk Indians in 1636, the Dutch established the settlement of Breucklen (broken land) as a port and farming village. Six years later, the inauguration of a ferry line to Manhattan established a link that would be reinforced with time and would eventually weave Brooklyn into the New York City fabric. The port at Gowanus Bay spawned an inland residential village. The village, centered in the heart of today's downtown Brooklyn, soon grew into a commercial center of its own. At roughly the same time, other Dutch settlers received land grants and built villages at Flatbush and Bushwick. Searching for religious freedom, an English noblewoman named Deborah Moody founded the utopian community of Gravesend at Gravesend Bay.

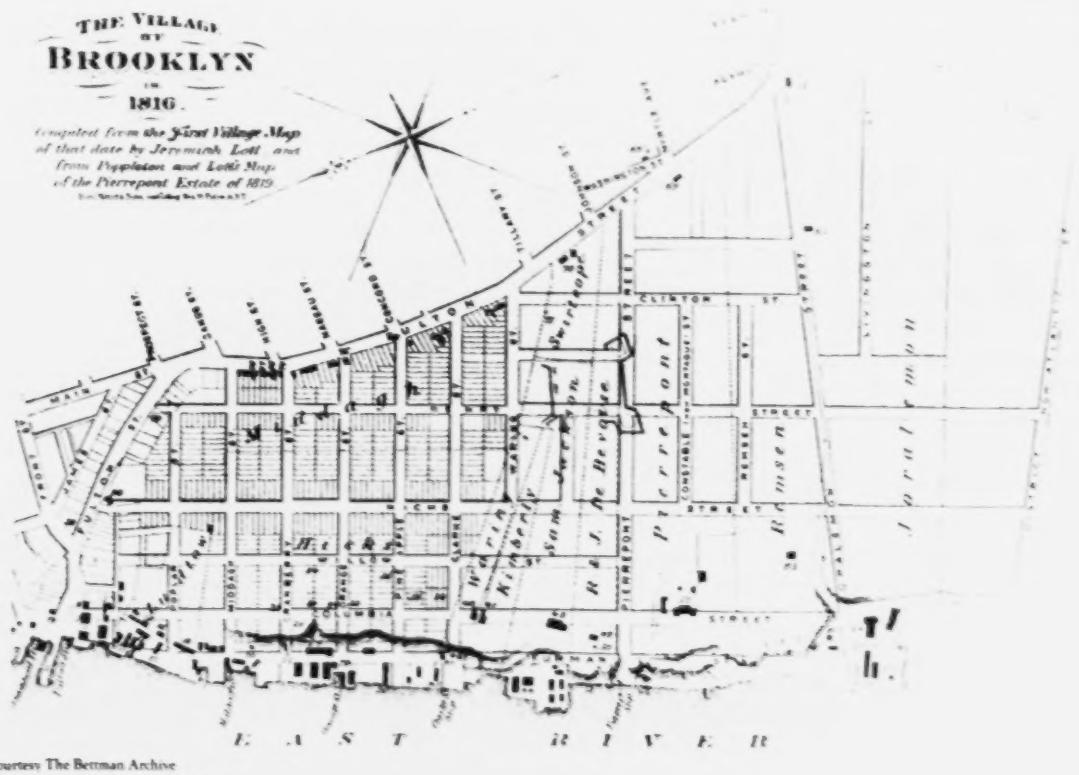
Until the early 1800s, the cities, towns, and villages that ultimately comprised Brooklyn remained strictly autonomous, separated by lengthy journeys across wooded hills, undeveloped fields, and verdant farmland. Though the commercial linkage with New York City was relatively strong, little residential connection existed between the two future boroughs until regular steam ferry service began in 1814. This new connection between lower Manhattan and Brooklyn's Clover Hill section (renamed Brooklyn Heights) quickly established the area as a promising suburban retreat for Manhattan business people. Development proceeded so that by 1815, the nearest wooded area to Manhattan had become the nearest bedroom suburb. Suburban growth continued along the East River and additional ferry connections permitted its spread as far north as Williamsburg.

Set beside the old agricultural town of Bushwick and the new semi-industrial village of Greenpoint, where shipbuilding set the pace for economic growth, new development around Williamsburg was both suburban and recreational. Its waterfront and greenery attracted Manhattan daytrippers and vacationers as well as new residents, and its streets were lined with hotels, beer gardens, and coffeehouses.

As long as access to Brooklyn was limited to ferry service, most development was confined to accessible East River coastal areas, the environs of the established villages, and around industrial port facilities. But by the mid-nineteenth century, with Manhattan filling in and with the accessible sections of Brooklyn suburbia developed, talk began to center on linking the two cities with a bridge. Land owners and speculators soon realized that it was only a matter of time until the thorough development and annexation of Kings County would be complete.

Meanwhile, in competition with New York City, Brooklynites decided that their own burgeoning city (which in 1862 had absorbed Williamsburg and Bushwick to become the third largest city in America) was in need of some cultural and recreational amenities of its own. By commissioning Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, designers of New York's Central Park, to create a park around Prospect Hill on Flatbush Road, they set the stage for park-side housing.

In preparation for the expected building boom, real estate developers began investigating the possibilities of buying up land, subdividing estates, and dreaming of farmland covered with rows of suburban homes. However, the anticipated bridge construction and the push to develop housing and parks was slowed and delayed by the Civil War and by a national financial panic in 1873. But, by the time the Brooklyn Bridge was completed in 1883, the economy had returned to normal. Pushing out towards new neighborhoods such as Park Slope, new Brooklyn residents either built homes themselves or else found new tract housing waiting for them.


THE VILLAGE OF
BROOKLYN
IN
1816.
Compiled from the First Village Map of that date by Jeremiah Lott and from Popplaton and Lotts Map of the Pierrepont Estate of 1819
EAST RIVER

Courtesy The Bettman Archive

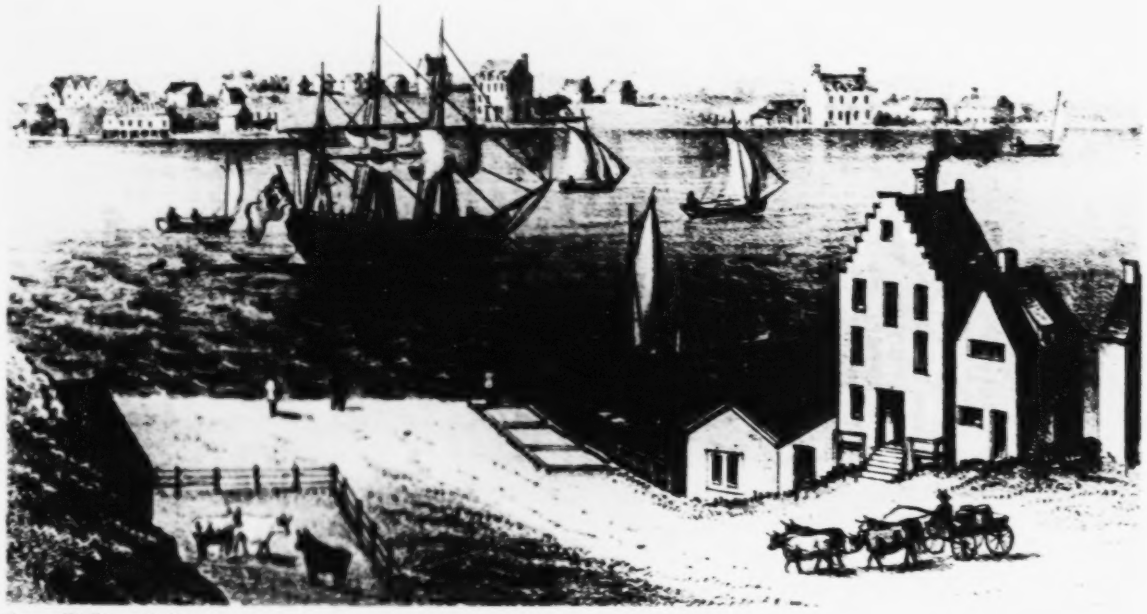
Map of Brooklyn, 1816.

The suburban gold rush that accompanied the opening of the Brooklyn Bridge was repeated each time new lands became accessible, and settlement patterns directly reflected transit development and station openings. The opening of the Williamsburg Bridge in 1903, for example, not only allowed for suburban growth, but relieved the population pressures plaguing the tenement-lined Lower East Side of Manhattan. Lower East Side Jews from Russia and Eastern Europe poured over the bridge and into bucolic Williamsburg. Within 20 years, Williamsburg became as overgrown and slum-like as those areas its new residents had left.

As mass transit lines were opened and extended, new frontiers became available for settlement. At the same time, older, exclusive areas became less desirable – partly because new areas were opened, but also because many people of different classes and backgrounds could get to them. The extension of the IRT into Brooklyn Heights in 1908 brought new residents and social change into this wealthy community. Similarly, with the opening of the Fourth Avenue Line in 1916, the distant, rural, seaside community of Bay Ridge (formerly Yellow Hook) became a burgeoning, urbanized suburb, a quick 30 minutes by train from Wall Street.

Much of this new development was orchestrated by real estate developers. Perceiving construction of a new road, bridge, or transit line to be imminent, they bought up land and built new communities. Entire sections of these new neighborhoods were constructed en masse and sold through advertisements, word of mouth, or solicitation, generally directed to particular groups of potential residents. One early entrepreneur named John R. Pitkin bought some east Brooklyn land near New Lots Avenue in 1835, intending to build a city to rival New York called East New York. But his dreams were dashed in a nationwide financial collapse two years later and the community languished until the transportation developments of the 1880s brought the area within commuting range of Manhattan. At that point, East New York started to fill up (though not as a separate city), neighboring Cypress Hills became a suburb, and nearby Brownsville began to grow.

Acreage in Brownsville had been subdivided by



Courtesy The Bettmann Archive

Looking toward Manhattan from the Ferry House in Brooklyn, 1746.

landowner Charles Brown in 1865. As late as 1883, though, there were no more than 250 frame buildings in the area. In 1885, Jacob Cohen, a Jewish tailor from the Lower East Side, moved in and passed favorable word back to his former neighbors. With the new Jamaica Avenue and Fulton Street elevated lines providing an easier link between the old and new neighborhoods, many other Lower East Siders followed Cohen to Brownsville. Two years later, a group of Lower East Side realtors bought up parcels of Brownsville land, built housing, and promoted the area to Jews living in that teeming Manhattan community.

Additional transit connections and an influx of families displaced by the Williamsburg Bridge spelled rapid growth for the Brownsville neighborhood by the early twentieth century. But, like the construction in Williamsburg after the opening of the Williamsburg Bridge, this was not suburban development. It was immigrant housing. The tenements that started to rise in Brownsville after 1900 set the tone for the development of the neighborhood. Industries, primarily garment manufacturing, opened and employed the new residents. Soon afterward, Brownsville was described as a "land of sweat shops and whirling sewing machines."

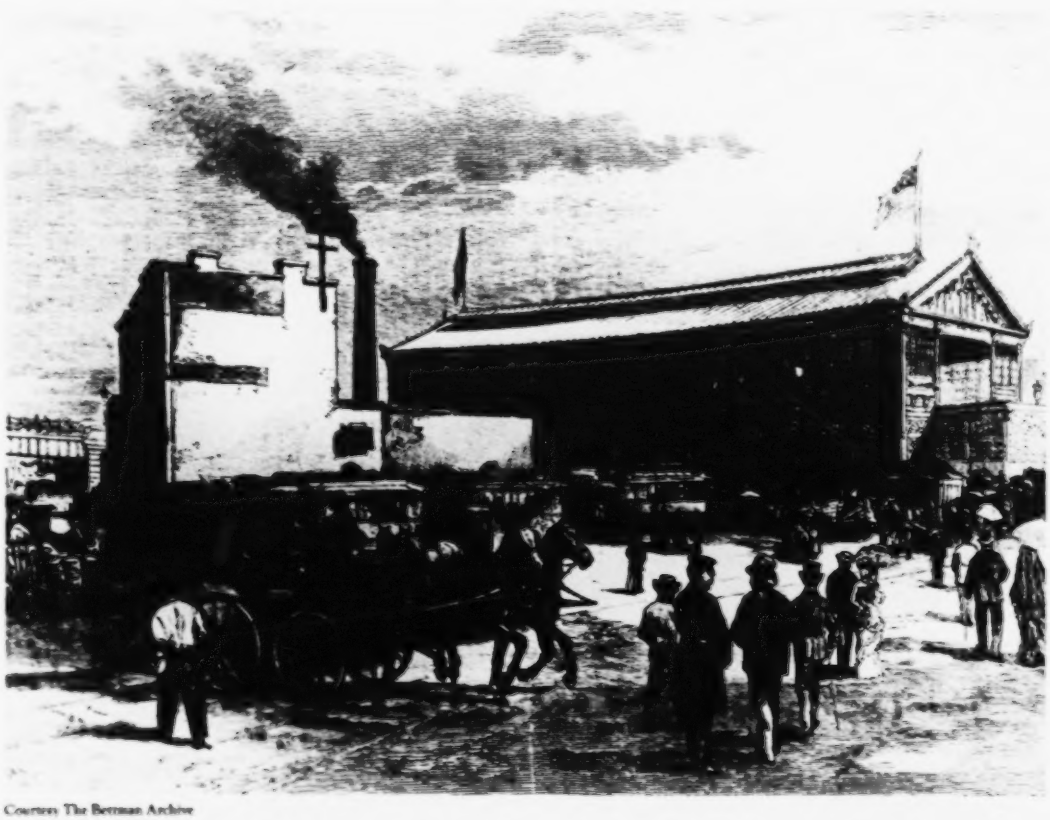
Throughout this period, townhouse suburbs thrived in downtown Brooklyn areas such as Brooklyn Heights, Park Slope, Fort Greene, Bedford, and Stuyvesant. Immigrant staging-ground communities developed in Williamsburg, Brownsville, and Ridgewood. Local industry grew and workers' housing was built in the harbor communities of Red Hook, Carroll Gardens, and Greenpoint. Although the southern tier of Brooklyn remained relatively inaccessible and largely rural, its coastal areas boomed as summer resorts.

The beaches at Bath Beach and Sea Gate remained popular throughout the early 1900s. In 1875, bathing pavilions opened in the fishing and boating center of Sheepshead Bay. Five years later, these recreation centers were joined by the Coney Island Jockey Club and the posh summer homes along Millionaire's Row. Brighton Beach sported grand hotels, and Coney Island thrived, first as a fashionable resort and, later, as a "fast, rollicking place." The major amusement parks and easy accessibility rapidly made Coney Island a favorite day-trip and vacation spot for Manhattanites.

Major growth in Brooklyn's southern tier began in earnest after World War I when subway extensions, a nationwide building boom, and a growing and aspiring second-generation population urbanized previously rural Brooklyn. Some of this growth had slowly begun years before. The extension of the Long Island Railroad in 1904 and of the IRT subway in 1912 had made settlement and subdivision more feasible in the old Dutch towns of Flatbush and Midwood. Grand single-family, Victorian-style homes were built and people of Dutch and English ancestry moved in. A small settlement west of Flatbush called Blythebourne grew up through the end of the nineteenth century. Norwegians had

Courtesy The Bettman Archive

Lithograph of Brooklyn in the winter of 1816-17. When the steam ferry service began in 1814, Brooklyn began to become a suburban retreat for Manhattan business people.



Courtesy The Bettman Archive

Linking Brooklyn and Manhattan with a bridge accelerated the development of Kings County.

found their way through Carroll Gardens and Park Slope to hilly Sunset Park by 1910 – five years before subway access – and settled into a rowhome community soon nicknamed "Viking Village." In 1916, a small group of Finns, employed primarily in the building trades, established a cooperative society in Sunset Park and built six co-op apartment houses there.

The decades between the world wars were characterized by large-scale growth in Brooklyn's southern tier. Small town Flatbush gave way to apartments and tract housing. Lots in Midwood were subdivided and filled with single-family homes. The population of these communities tripled in just ten years and consisted mainly of second generation, upwardly mobile Jews.

The building boom spread – east to East Flatbush (where transit access was poor), and to Rugby (which issued its own promotional brochures), and west to a new community a real estate developer called Borough Park. Absorbing the old Blythebourne section, Borough Park was characterized by walk-up apartment houses and one- and two-family homes. Its population, too, was chiefly Jewish, in this case former residents of Williamsburg who worked primarily in the garment industry.

South of Borough Park, in old New Utrecht, real estate developers carved twenty blocks out of the old Charles Benson farm and built a model neighborhood they called Bensonhurst. The original plan set aside the land between the development and the ocean to assure a permanent seaside view. But the boom was on and soon all the land surrounding the neighborhood was filled up with housing. The model development, now lost in the sprawl, lent its name to all of the new settlements in its vicinity. By the 1930s, Bensonhurst had attracted a populace that mainly was Jewish and Italian.

With urbanization, the resort areas lost much of

their panache. The building boom of the twenties dotted the area around Bath Beach with houses. The Sheepshead Speedway was replaced with row homes during the mid-1920s. Not long afterwards, the Jockey Club site at Sheepshead Bay was subdivided for housing. Next door in Brighton Beach and Coney Island, tenements, row homes, and apartment houses sprang up amidst the bungalows. The private homes of Sea Gate were converted to rooming houses.

As mass transit expansion brought development to communities along its routes, the growing popularity of the automobile changed growth patterns throughout the borough, and new highway building facilitated its use. After construction began on the Belt Parkway (which grids the southern tier) during the late 1930s, a landfill program was inaugurated in the lowlands around Jamaica Bay. Housing sprouted in Gravesend and Flatlands, attracting young families from more densely inhabited parts of Brooklyn. Italians and Eastern Europeans went to Gravesend and Jews settled in Flatlands. Canarsie, still truck farms and amusement parks in the thirties, began to shed its backwater vaudeville-joke image during the 1950s. By then it was covered with housing units and became instead a suburban option for young, predominantly Jewish and Italian inner-Brooklyn families. Further south in Mill Basin, single-family homes, some with boat slips, lined suburban-like circular roads and cul-de-sacs in an area that once had been slated for development as an industrial park with worker housing to be located within walking distance of the factory.

On the other hand, just as highway construction opened up new areas along the southern tier, it ripped through Brooklyn's older, established neighborhoods and tore them apart. In 1941, the Gowanus Expressway was perched atop the pillars of the old Third Avenue elevated line passing through the Sunset Park section. As blighting an influence as the train had been, the highway was worse since it cast a broader shadow and appropriated additional land for roadway and access ramps. The stores along this stretch of Third Avenue, once one of Sunset Park's main shopping streets, moved or went out of business. Soon, the chief commerce on the street was prostitution. The people who hung out on the avenue looked dangerous, and patrons of the once thriving area stayed away. The neighborhood came apart, and the population changed dramatically in a few years. Critics say a slight change in the highway's path, moving it just one block west to Second Avenue, might have saved the neighborhood.

Courtesy The Bettman Archive

Grand, Victorian-style homes were built in previously rural parts of Brooklyn after the Long Island Railroad was extended in 1904.

Further north, a trench was dug through Italian Carroll Gardens during the late forties for the roadbed of the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway. Blocks of houses were demolished in the trench's path, and bridges were built across the road in an attempt to reconnect the halves of the neighborhood. Relatively undisturbed, the eastern half continued to thrive. But caught between industrial docks and the highway, the western section deteriorated quickly. The process of decline was accelerated by an ill-fated experiment during the early 1970s that was intended to drain the polluted Gowanus Canal. However, the canal remains fetid and many houses west of the expressway have suffered cracked foundations and crumbling walls. Ironically, the construction of the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway brought some improvement to one of Carroll Gardens's neighbors, the community of Brooklyn Heights. There, the road ran along the docks and it was partially covered by a cantilevered esplanade. While disguising the heights of Brooklyn Heights, the esplanade has provided the

neighborhood with much-needed and well-used park space and one of the best views in town.

Even without highway construction to bring about decline, many Brooklyn neighborhoods continued to deteriorate. Since the 1930s, the decay has been rapid and dramatic. The forces that brought about the decline included changing accesses, new housing opportunities, national economic trends, actions by real estate entrepreneurs, and changing patterns of ethnic migration. The changes that overtook what ultimately came to be known as Bedford-Stuyvesant represent the whole range.

Adjacent to Weeksville, one of the city's earliest black communities – which had begun as an outgrowth of the Free Negro Movement around 1784 and flourished through the 1830s – the Bedford area had become too expensive for most blacks by the late 1870s. Displaced by wealthy whites who lived in large brownstone townhouses and shopped in elegant stores on Nostrand Avenue, the middle-class blacks of Weeksville moved on to East New York or out of Brooklyn. Some of the more well-to-do blacks remained, as did some lower income blacks who were generally employed as domestics and who took what inexpensive housing was available.

After the opening of the Williamsburg Bridge in 1903, Jews and Italians moved into the fringes of the neighborhood. By the end of World War I, 15 years later, they had moved into the district's heart, joining Irish and Germans in replacing the WASPs who had moved on to Queens and further out on Long Island. Until then, Bedford had retained its reputation as an area of prosperous residents with its apartment towers, suburban-style mansions, and private clubs. But as newer suburbs opened up in the years between the wars, Bedford homes became accessible to families of more modest means and ethnic diversity – Jews, Italians, Irish, and later, West Indians. New construction in the neighborhood continued throughout the 1920s. By 1930, however, speculation had overstepped demand. Houses went unsold, and, as the impact of the crash of 1929 was felt, many of the area's homeowners went into foreclosure and property values plummeted.

At the same time, with black migration from the South to New York City on the rise, Harlem, the most popular first stop for southern black migrants, was overflowing. In 1936, the Eighth Avenue subway line opened and provided service along the "A" train route from Harlem to Bedford. At the same time, Duke Ellington sang "Take the 'A' Train," encouraging whites to travel to Harlem for the nightlife. Instead, the melody was background music for a large-scale movement of Harlem blacks into a broad area of central Bedford that came to be known as Bedford-Stuyvesant. By 1941, although some portions of the Bedford area were still populated with Russian Jews, Bedford-Stuyvesant had the second largest concentration of blacks in New York City (after Harlem). Fear of racial change, the ongoing suburban exodus, and the work of professional blockbusters kept whites on the move. Bedford-Stuyvesant, 25 percent black in 1940, was half black in 1950, and 74 percent black (plus 11 percent Hispanic) by 1960.

Courtesy The Bettman Archive

An aerial view of Brooklyn, the fourth largest city in America.

In the years following World War II, the type of ethnic and racial change that had transformed the Bedford-Stuyvesant community was repeated throughout the western and central parts of the borough. Combined factors made the move desirable and easy: new housing opportunities in the southern tier of Brooklyn, in Queens, and in the suburbs; Federal policies that encouraged movement out of the cities; a severe city-wide housing shortage; new means of transportation; and fear of falling property values. When vacancies appeared and houses went up for sale, new groups were waiting to move in.

As the Jews of Williamsburg moved on to Borough Park and beyond, and as the area's Italians pushed north

towards Bushwick and into Ridgewood, they were replaced by Puerto Ricans and, in growing numbers, by Chasidic Jews, most of whom were refugees from war-torn Europe who took up residence in Williamsburg, Crown Heights, and Borough Park. Blacks from Harlem, the South, and particularly from the West Indies, took the place of Jews in Crown Heights. Puerto Ricans replaced Norwegians, Poles, and Italians in Sunset Park.

As in Manhattan, there was some attempt to provide a middle-class anchor in these city neighborhoods. The Equitable Life Assurance Company constructed the 12-building, 1221-unit Clinton Hill Apartments between 1945 and 1955. But most of the new, more centrally located housing developments erected through the 1950s and sixties were low-income project housing. Like their Manhattan counterparts, these buildings generally were unattractive highrises surrounded by relatively unattended, vandalized park areas and proved to be inappropriate housing for those who lived there. In addition, the development of such projects alienated most remaining middle-class residents, marked the neighborhood as a slum and the general area as the "central Brooklyn ghetto."

By the 1970s, ethnic and racial succession had changed the character of neighborhoods not only in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Crown Heights, Williamsburg, Park Slope, and Sunset Park, but also in Bushwick, East New York (particularly after the riots in 1966), Brownsville (which had been built largely as a tenement community), and Flatbush. Fear of such racial succession — and the stereotypes it conjured up — was fed upon by professional blockbusters. Once the trend began, its continuation was all but inevitable.

The forces behind and within these decades of rapid change have been analyzed and debated since

Courtesy New York State Department of Commerce

Each additional transit connection changed the character of Brooklyn neighborhoods. Pictured here is one of the most famous — the Brooklyn Bridge completed in 1883.

they began. Fear and stereotypes certainly have played a role. Federal housing, tax, welfare, and highway policies, and "redlining" (drawing an imaginary red line around areas not considered appropriate for investment) by banks and insurance companies during that era have been vilified, and for good reason. City rent regulations and landlord greed also have been cited as causes of change. But the essence of the change, despite its enormity and speed and regardless of its specific causes is no anomaly. It is, in fact, characteristic of the general nature of change in Brooklyn, and throughout New York City. Neighborhood turf is fragile, and the quality of the change is, in the end, in the eye of the observer.

Paradoxically, the housing shortage following World War II spawned a different type of neighborhood change in Brooklyn's brownstone belt. Brooklyn Heights, an early suburban retreat, was rediscovered by middle-class city dwellers who rejected the suburban option and found this old community to be an affordable, accessible, and urbane place in which to live. Through the 1950s, Brooklyn Heights witnessed an artistic renaissance as artists, writers, and showpeople took over its charming brownstones or moved into tenement housing on its fringes. By the early sixties, the process now known as gentrification was firmly under way. Young, professional, middle-class, generally white urbanites were buying and renovating old townhouses (known generically as brownstones) and were transforming a neighborhood on the wane into a thriving and increasingly expensive community.

In 1966, the city declared the Brooklyn Heights neighborhood a historic district, thus protecting its landmark character. Soon afterwards, tenements east of the brownstone section came down and were replaced by middle-income townhouses and apartment towers, designed to conform as well as possible with the low-rise neighborhood scale. In the wake of such revitalization and the inflation of property values that accompanied it, pioneering brownstoners have ventured into adjacent neighborhoods – south through Irish Cobble Hill and towards Italian Carroll Gardens, east to Park Slope and Prospect Heights, and north towards Fort Greene and Clinton Hill. Despite appearances to the contrary, the gentrifiers have proven to be just another ethnic-style group, moving into a community and bringing neighborhood change as its consequent baggage. How much change the gentry has brought has varied by

Courtesy New York State Department of Commerce

After World War II, Brooklyn's brownstones were rediscovered by the middle class. The renovation of old townhouses in the 1960's changed declining neighborhoods into thriving ones.

neighborhood. Cobble Hill and Park Slope have been transformed radically. Carroll Gardens (which has been solidly and steadfastly Italian since the turn of the century) and Sunset Park are just beginning to feel the bite. Fort Greene's change has been both overplayed and overrated but continues to be rediscovered by the media each year.

Change in these neighborhoods is undeniable. It is reflected in the faces of the residents, the nature of the stores, the facades of the buildings. Like the forces that brought on the creation of the central Brooklyn ghetto, the development of the southern tier and even the initial suburban push into Brooklyn were due largely to forces far beyond the control of the neighborhoods – forces of economics, politics, and society that are often national, even international, in scope. The changes wrought by gentrification are similarly characteristic, reflecting the nature of and reasons for neighborhood change in New York City.

Not all of the neighborhood change that would be considered upgrading falls under the rubric of gentrification. Much of it is brought about by strong neighborhood groups committed to holding their own in the face of mounting destruction and to seeing their community prosper and grow. Some groups have been more

successful in this effort than have others. But the model organization in what has become something of a model community is Bedford-Stuyvesant.

During the late 1960s, Bedford-Stuyvesant was a national synonym for blighted slum. Walking its streets in 1968, then Senator Robert Kennedy suggested that with the infusion of some philanthropic funds and the hard work of a community-based development group, some of the decay could be reversed. Sixteen years later, the Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation has done much of that. It has revitalized the neighborhood's commercial heart with an architecturally exciting outdoor shopping mall filled with national chain stores and local enterprises. It has brought in new industry and rehabilitated a model block of storefronts and apartments for community residents. It has facilitated the creation of substantial numbers of new housing units in the community and fostered community pride with block-painting projects. In many ways, Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration has turned the neighborhood around. Indeed, the community still has a multitude of problems, and the Restoration Corporation has merely exposed the tip of the iceberg. But there is the sense that change is coming – that hope can exist for a better neighborhood.

Once the playgrounds of the upper-class, Brooklyn's beaches have changed, too. Manhattan Beach, though no longer a resort, is still an expensive middle-class community backed up by the relatively stable, but now quite densely populated, middle-class section across Sheepshead Bay. The houses of Sea Gate were reconverted to single homes after World War II. Chiefly because they are now surrounded by a guarded fence, they have also remained middle-class and almost suburban. Much of Coney Island was demolished during the 1960s and was replaced with highrise, low-income housing projects. Coney Island still draws enormous crowds every hot summer day, but its residential streets are tattered, and its off-season appearance is increasingly forlorn.

Courtesy Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation

The Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation has revitalized the commercial heart of a once decayed neighborhood.

Brighton Beach had become a largely Jewish, lower-middle-income community. Despite the suburban exodus, it retained much of its population. In recent years, it has experienced a new surge of immigrants that has transformed it once again. Large numbers of Jewish refugees from the Soviet Union have turned Brighton Beach into an American Odessa-by-the-Sea, opening Russian emporiums on the boardwalk, speaking Russian on the streets, and filling the schools with a new population.

In its patterns of growth and decay, Brooklyn is a microcosm of the wider city. From its gentrified, brownstone neighborhoods to its decayed ghettos, from the tenuous suburban nature of Flatbush to the highrise towers of Starrett City (a two, 175-unit complex built on the Jamaica Bay marshland in 1975), from its fleeing middle class to its new arrivals – both from within the United States and from foreign lands – Brooklyn is indeed a city in itself, the fourth largest city in America.

THE BRONX

With its melange of devastated tenements, suburban riverfront mansions, seaside cottages, massive housing superblocks, and fading boulevards of grand Art Deco-style apartment buildings, the Bronx stands as a study in contrasts and typifies the rapid succession of growth and decline experienced throughout New York City. Like Brooklyn, its growth was dictated largely by developments in transportation. But more than Brooklyn, its days as a suburban escape valve were sharply numbered. The Bronx became a microcosm of American urban change squeezed into just over half a century.

As late as 1900, three-quarters of the Bronx still was undeveloped farms and open fields. Along the Long Island Sound and the Harlem River waterfront were resort areas dotted with summer colonies like Throgs Neck and Orchard Beach. Ferries plied the Sound, traveling across to College Point in Queens. Steamboats cruised past the hotels and restaurants on the High Bridge shore. Small settlements dotted the central Bronx, with manors and country estates in Bedford Park and Fieldston and famous race tracks at Jerome Park and Van Nest. The owner of a tapestry factory built in Williamsbridge in 1890 brought in French weavers to work the looms, and a French colony flourished there for a time.

While the northern extremities and the coastal sections retained their country air, the southern Bronx was developed during the first half of the nineteenth century. Jordan Mott's iron foundry set the pace for industrial development in the Mott Haven area in 1828, and the new Harlem Railroad provided the first measure of easy access shortly thereafter. By the 1840s, the South Bronx had been discovered. Germans and Irish moved up from Manhattan, relying on the railroad and building homes on streets that followed the Manhattan street grid across the narrow Harlem River along with the railroad tracks. While constructing the High Bridge portion of the Croton Reservoir system in 1848, Irish workers found the land to their liking and settled there. More bridges, elevated lines, and the subway made the area increasingly accessible. Development followed. By the 1890s, the Melrose section — in 1856, a growing railroad suburb composed of 175 gabled farmhouses — was filled in with row homes, tenements, commerce, and industry. The main intersection at Courtlandt and East 149th Street was a bustling crossroads nicknamed "Dutch Broadway."

In nearby Morrisania, McKinley Square was the central hub, the home of Yiddish theater, political rallies, and social clubs. The opening of the Third Avenue elevated line in 1886 had brought Jews — as well as Italians, Irish, and Germans — from such crowded Manhattan districts as the Lower East Side to this new frontier.

After 1900, development galloped through this borough, increasing the population from 275,000 in

1905 to 950,000 in 1930. Cut through the western Bronx in 1909, the Grand Concourse was Louis Risse's New York answer to the Champs Elysees in Paris. Perched on the crest of a rolling hill, it joined together the irregular street grids and set the style for Bronx development for years to come. In the three-decade building boom that followed, the Grand Concourse was lined with handsome apartment houses, many of them masterpieces of Art Deco design. The apartments were spacious with sunken living rooms, cedar closets, and stylish tile work and deep-colored porcelain fixtures in the bathrooms. Some complexes had central courtyards complete with fountains and gardens. Many buildings had doormen and concierges. A Grand Concourse address became a status symbol and attracted upwardly mobile Jews from the Lower East Side. Developers responded by building more apartment houses on the streets off the Concourse, thus creating in a dense urban fabric, a canyon-like community built on narrow, winding hillside streets, punctuated by broad avenues and a grand central boulevard. The extension of subway service to the Concourse during the 1920s and 1930s accelerated growth.

As the Concourse area grew, so did other Bronx communities. By 1915, the one- and two-family homes of Morrisania had given way to five-story walk-up apartment buildings. The extension of the Interborough Rapid Transit (IRT) to East 108th Street in 1905 brought a minor boom to the Belmont area where small investors put up single structures and small rows of houses. By the 1920s, no vacant land was left in Belmont. A sizable Italian community developed there and still thrives.

Courtesy The Bettman Archive

Burnside Avenue in 1893.

Courtesy The Bettman Archive

The Grand Concourse in the 1920's, the New York answer to the Champs Elysees.

Next door to Belmont, East Tremont served as a staging ground. It was home to Irish, then Italians, and later Jews who lived there until advanced prosperity permitted them to move on.

The building boom of the 1920s also brought development to the former manor lands of Bedford Park as well as Williamsbridge, Pelham Parkway, Morris Park, Baychester, Fordham, and Throgs Neck. The Metropolitan Life Insurance Company built the 171-building Parkchester development in 1941, creating an instant north Bronx community of 40,000 people. Most of this development attracted ethnic groups on their way up. Williamsbridge was home to Irish, Italians, and Jews. By 1930, Pelham Parkway and Morris Park, once Dutch communities, had experienced a succession of Irish and German residents before becoming largely Italian and Jewish. Throgs Neck attracted Scandanavians, Germans, Italians, and Irish. Parkchester attracted a large middle-class Irish population and remained almost entirely white until the 1968 Fair Housing Act legislated integration.

During the 1930s and early forties, as development in the northern Bronx pushed on, growth in the already filled-in southern section slowed down or stopped entirely. Populations began to change. By the 1930s, the housing in Morrisania was considered obsolete; the

Courtesy The Bettman Archive

Many buildings in The Bronx are known for their ornate exteriors, such as The Bronx County Courthouse.

Jewish population was moving out and was being replaced by blacks who generally migrated up from Harlem. A guidebook from the 1930s described the Hunts Point area as a neighborhood of "bleak residences, industrial plants, and tidal flats."

Throughout this period, Bronx resorts continued to flourish, although nearby development and easier transit access frequently made them day-trip destinations rather than summer colonies. Clason Point was the site of a thriving amusement park from 1910 to 1935. Orchard Beach was a first-class private resort before going public in 1936. Silver Beach and Edgewater Park sported winding paths lined with summer bungalows.

But the heyday of the central Bronx soon drew to a close amid sweeping changes in the ethnic composition of neighborhoods. The Great Depression brought the Irish from the South Bronx into Highbridge while blacks moved into the South Bronx from Harlem. During the late 1940s and fifties, Puerto Ricans moved across the river from East Harlem or directly from Puerto Rico into the South Bronx causing the exodus of other established populations. The slowdown in maintenance under Depression and wartime conditions brought irreversible deterioration to Belmont and East

Courtesy The Bettman Archive

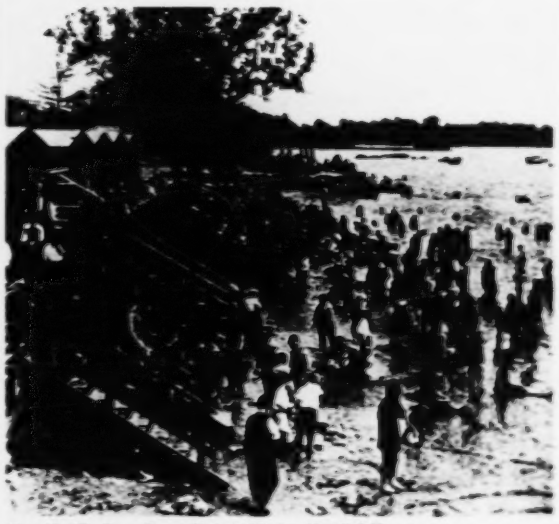
The Metropolitan Life Insurance Company built Parkchester (pictured here) in 1941, creating an instant community of 40,000 people.

Tremont. The construction of the Cross Bronx Expressway through the East Tremont area during the late 1940s displaced almost an entire neighborhood of middle-class Jews. And, in the wake of a city-wide housing shortage after the war, young families, encouraged by Federal home loan programs and highway construction, found the suburbs the most viable homeowning alternative.

The urban exodus, population decline, and racial change that overtook the south and central Bronx during the 1950s and sixties were accompanied by extensive development in the then underdeveloped northern, western, and eastern extremeties of the borough. Highrise apartment houses sprouted up along the highway amidst the grand homes of Riverdale. Twelve new middle-income housing projects were built in Soundview, doubling the population, straining services, and creating tremendous tensions between new and old residents. Row homes and public housing rose in Baychester. Lavish dwellings were built in Spencer Estates. Tract homes began to dot the suburban-like streets of Throgs Neck. Beach homes were winterized in Clason Point and Harding Park.

But the coup de grace for the older Bronx neighborhoods was the development of Co-op City during the late 1960s. Made accessible by highways strung across the sandy marshes, this northeast Bronx section was opened as the Freedomland amusement park in 1960. When the park failed, developers moved in, filled in the marshes with sand, and built a massive 41 building complex for 15,382 families. The buildings opened in 1969 as middle-income cooperative apartments financed under a special city-state subsidy plan. As an affordable alternative for thousands of upwardly mobile Bronx families who were seeking new housing, Co-op City drew much of its population from areas such as the west Bronx, where the grandeur of the Concourse had been long since tarnished. The almost wholesale uprooting of west Bronx residents accelerated the speed of decline and disinvestment in the area. Already a victim of a host of urban ills, the west Bronx was ravaged by massive sudden vacancies, entrepreneurial speculations, revenue milking, and redlining.

The depressed population of the deteriorating neighborhoods in the southern Bronx began to move up the Concourse to take the place of the departing middle class. As the lower class moved up, the middle class moved out with greater speed. In many ways the transition of the South Bronx has the earmarks of other experiences in neighborhood change. One group was taking the place of another, and each group was moving on to a better life. This pattern was repeated over and over in staging-ground neighborhoods throughout the city.



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Orchard Beach in 1915 when it was still a private resort.

But there are some fundamental differences in this situation that separate it from the typical pattern. The Concourse was not built as a staging ground. Its early residents viewed it not as a way station but as a pinnacle of achievement. The Concourse neighborhood was, in its day, the best. When its residents left, therefore, it was not for something better. Of course, some were chasing the American dream of a single family home on its own plot of land, but many were not leaving outmoded housing, as had the tenants of Brooklyn brownstones during the 1920s. Nor were they escaping the onrush of commercial growth, as had been the case in Manhattan. The Concourse was and continued to be a bedroom community. Its residents were leaving, instead, because they felt pushed out by a lack of housing opportunities and, later, by fear of racial change. For the most part, those who replaced them were not moving up the ladder. They too were fleeing neighborhoods in trouble, neighborhoods where abandonment, arson, and general deterioration had ripped apart most of what remained of community fabric.

Still, some of the Bronx remains stable. The far northern end of the Concourse houses a relatively solid, but aging Jewish population. Riverdale and Fieldston are still prosperous, upper-middle class enclaves. Bounded by Woodlawn Cemetery, the Bronx River Parkway, and the city border, the Woodlawn neighborhood is an isolated, affluent, stable community more like neighboring Westchester County than the Bronx. The residents of the Silver Beach community formed a cooperative in 1973 and bought the land under their winterized bungalows from the family-run real estate company that previously had owned it. Similarly, the Harding Park community organized to buy the land occupied by its homes from the City, which took possession when the previous owner defaulted in 1978. Set on winding paths by Long Island Sound, both communities remain solid and secluded.

The insularity enjoyed by Woodlawn and Silver Beach has preserved other Bronx communities as well. City Island, once a major shipbuilding center, is connected to the mainland by a single bridge. Other than its residents commuting to jobs off the island and aside from nonresident patronage of the island's many seafood restaurants, there is little interaction between the island and the rest of the Bronx. Stable and semi-suburban Throgs Neck retains a small-town air, reinforced by its peninsular location and the Throgs Neck Expressway along its northern boundary. A triangular-shaped neighborhood of modest one- and two-family homes near Pelham Bay, it is framed by three expressways and maintains its Scandanavian, Irish, Italian, and Greek heritages. On the other hand, in an effort to withstand enforced insularity, the Italian community in Unionport long has tried to maintain its ties with the neighborhood across the Bruckner Expressway to which it was once attached. And, while Parkchester, the city-like Metropolitan Life development, has suffered from some urban problems of late, it has maintained its sense of community and has withstood the advancing decay.

Today, it appears that the paths taken by many Bronx communities are unlikely to undergo a radical change in direction. The stable neighborhoods are protected from outside influences by strong natural and

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Co-op City opened in 1969 and became an affordable alternative for thousands of middle-class Bronx families.

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manufactured barriers. Deterioration of the apartment structures may occur, and the forces of disinvestment may eventually cause damage similar to that suffered by the buildings on the Grand Concourse. But generally, these developments, Parkchester and Co-op City in particular, are too large, too unified, and too visible to deteriorate without notice, protest, and action. And they probably will be saved for just that reason. The stable low-rise communities are often more suburban in character. Tucked away from urban hills, they probably will survive as well.

But the older parts of the Bronx, most notably the southern and western portions, can only continue to deteriorate. The process is ongoing and advancing. These communities do not attract investment, nor do they lend themselves to gentrification, a process which has revitalized troubled sections of other troubled boroughs. Deterioration can only continue until some reuse of the land, perhaps industrial, generates jobs and new home construction. Then new neighborhoods will be able to grow out of the rubble that is piling up today.

Courtesy The Bettman Archive

Apartment buildings on Washington Avenue.

QUEENS

Always more like suburban Nassau County which it borders than the city to which it is tied, sprawling Queens has been and remains a borough of towns, villages, and real estate developments. Over the years, improved transportation links and spurts of growth have softened its borders, blurring the divisions between communities. Still, some sense of individualized identity does remain. Forest Hills is Forest Hills and Kew Gardens Kew Gardens.

Queens is newer, more scattered, and less troubled than any of the adjacent boroughs. The chief reasons for this are developmental. Transportation links to Manhattan came late to most of Queens. During the nineteenth century, ferries connected the settlements along the East River and Long Island Sound to Manhattan, fostering some suburban growth and much industrial development along Queens' western edge. The Long Island Railroad laid its tracks across Queens during the mid-nineteenth century. However, the development the railroad sparked was limited to the areas around station stops, and these were generally located at already established settlements. Not until the elevated and subway lines cut through during the 1920s and 1930s — particularly as Queens prepared to host the 1939-40 World's Fair — were truck farms supplanted by housing with any regularity.

Even then subway access was minimal. With highways overtaking subways as an arena of public works, the extensive network of transit lines that crisscrossed Brooklyn and connected Manhattan to so much of the Bronx never developed in Queens. The western portions remained relatively accessible, but connections to the sprawling outer reaches were provided only by two trunk lines. It took the development of the Federal highway program and the push to get ready for the 1964-65 World's Fair to bring eastern Queens into the fold. The extensive road system that was built created thriving suburbs from far-flung farms.

In its early years, Queens, like Brooklyn and the Bronx, was dotted with villages that grew up at stopover points on major roads or along waterways. Landings at Jamaica Bay, Hunter's Point, Hallet's Cove, and Little Neck Bay focused settlement, and towns were chartered at Flushing, Jamaica, and Hempstead. As the central city of Manhattan pushed northward during the nineteenth century, the water towns across the East River became major parts of an expanding metropolitan area. Astoria, an early settlement incorporated in 1839, became a suburb after 1815 when steam ferry service connected it to Manhattan. As the East River and Newtown Creek became industrial water routes, previously suburban shore areas like Astoria became industrialized as well. Residential neighborhoods were engulfed. New housing was quickly built for workers. A hodgepodge of rapid growth transformed the community almost over-

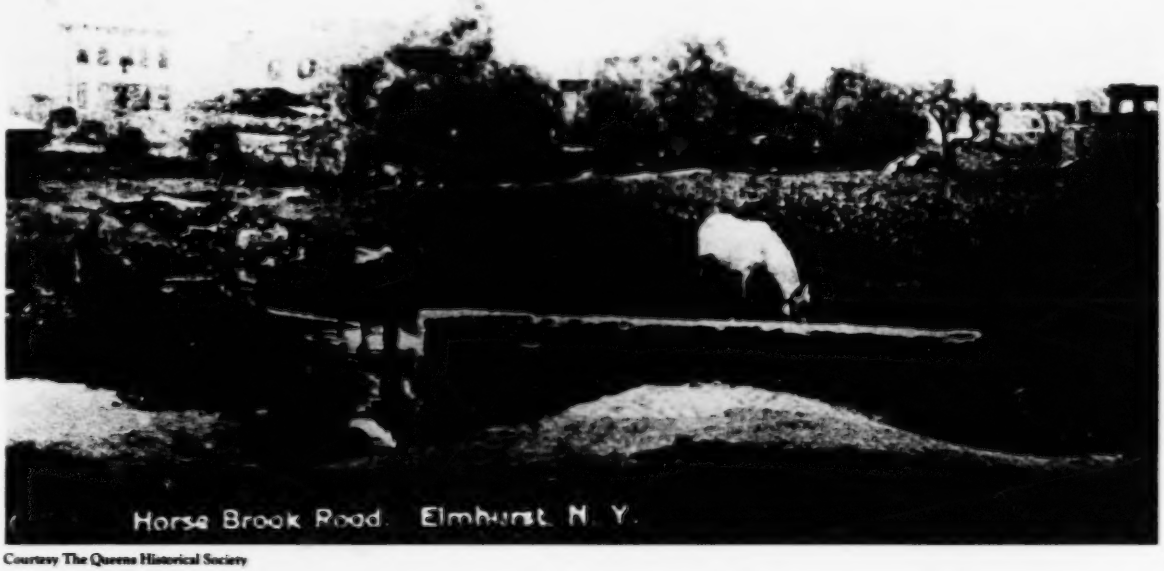
night. Next door to Astoria, Long Island City was heavily industrialized long before its incorporation in 1870.

Hunter's Point, south of Long Island City along the Newtown Creek, received its growth impetus during the 1860s when the Long Island Railroad terminus was moved there from Atlantic Avenue. This initial boom brought local trade to the new transit node. Rows of handsome Italianate style brownstones were built to house a well-to-do population. But, as the boom continued and the community became more popular, the area lost its appeal to the upper class. Prosperous residents generally were replaced by Irish government workers from Long Island City.

Named to honor its short career as host to an Episcopal school, College Point on Long Island Sound was the site that Conrad Poppenhusen chose for his ironworks in 1851. With ferries running to the Bronx and Manhattan, the town thrived both as an industrial center and as a resort community. But the decline of water travel imperiled its industrial base, and the town's importance faded. In 1920, National Prohibition dealt College Point the final blow as the resort trade also dried up.

Further up the Newtown Creek from Hunter's Point was Maspeth, the earliest of Queens settlements, dating to 1642. During the 1700s, Quakers from nearby Flushing began a community in Maspeth. By the Civil War, the village had developed enough to devise a permanent street system. But, like the other river towns, Maspeth's residential days were numbered. Increased traffic on the East River made Newtown Creek an important commercial channel. Rope and oilcloth industries prospered along its banks. As Maspeth became industrialized, residential land use was confined to its eastern borders. In time, industrial use polluted the waterway and ruined the community's waterfront charm.

Further inland, the independent towns of Flushing and Jamaica grew and flourished, spawning their own



Courtesy The Queens Historical Society

Transportation links and development came later to most of Queens. In 1905, horses were grazing in Elmhurst on a site that is present-day Queens Boulevard.

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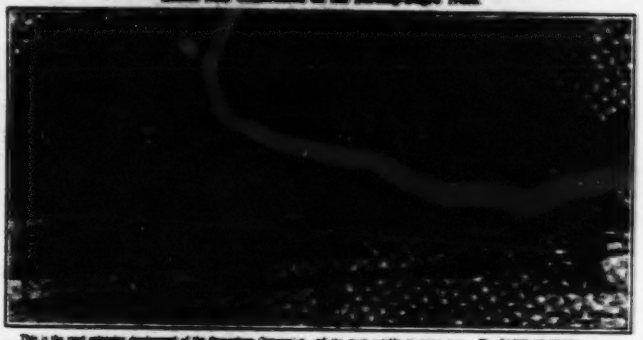

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Courtesy The Queens Historical Society

Queensboro Corporation advertisement for property in Jackson Heights, September 8, 1910.

suburbs – Hillcrest and Jamaica Hills – providing jobs for their residents and enjoying a character of their own. Growing up as a major stop-off point on the road between New York and Long Island, Jamaica became a booming trade and commercial center. The addition of the railroad to its transportation network in 1832 pushed along that growth. But large-scale development in Jamaica did not begin until after 1900 when greater growth in western Queens and improved transportation connections (the Long Island Railroad's (LIRR) East River tunnel in 1910, the LIRR's Jamaica Station in 1913, and the Brooklyn Manhattan Transit Company (BMT) elevated line in 1918) brought Jamaica into metropolitan area commuting range.

Flushing, settled by the Dutch during the 1600s and called Vlissingen, became a Quaker community after John Bourne and some 50 followers settled there in 1657. While its environs remained agricultural for many years, Flushing, situated near the East River and on Flushing Bay, was blessed with commercial accessibility. By the mid-nineteenth century, Flushing had become an urbanized town. Urbanization was pushed along when the LIRR arrived in 1854 and further improved the town's already fine transportation system.

Off the river and far from established towns, parts of the Queens frontier had been sought as sites for summer residences and country homes. During the early 1800s, Woodside, north of Maspeth, was a large estate; when development pressures intensified after the Civil War it was divided up. In 1850, Samuel Lord of Lord & Taylor fashioned an estate in Elmhurst amidst the farms of German and Swedish immigrants. However, the opening of a local LIRR stop in 1874 made the area accessible and ripe for speculation. As farmers sold their land, developers moved right in. The new neighborhoods were advertised in community newspapers in Manhattan's "Little Italy" and on the Lower East Side. By the 1890s, Elmhurst and neighboring Corona had lost their rural airs and had become urbanized communities for upwardly mobile Italian-Americans.

Courtesy The Queens Historical Society

Looking along Elmhurst Avenue from Hampton Street, December 1920. At top left, the Flushing Elevated.

Over on the Atlantic coast, the Rockaways were an exhausting five-hour journey across field and marsh from Manhattan before 1834. But, when the development of a ferry to railroad to six-horse mini-bus connection cut the trip to two hours, the coast became accessible, and the Rockaways became a popular resort.

Across Jamaica Bay from the Rockaways, Howard Beach was a nineteenth century fishing and boating

When they were less accessible, the Rockaways were resorts for the wealthy.

Courtesy The Queens Historical Society

Courtesy The Queens Historical Society

Pictured here are two mansions in 1914, Broad Lawn and Castle-Las.

village. While the community has been transformed into a suburban development during the last 30 years, some of the area still retains its old-time flavor today, albeit amidst decay.

Later development in Queens generally followed the growth of transportation routes and provided bedrooms for central city workers. Much of it reflected the influence of images conjured up and conveyed by real estate developers and utopian planners. An exception to this was Steinway, a company town built in 1881 around the firm's Long Island City piano factory. Rows of worker homes filled 400 acres and housed chiefly German immigrants who opened beer gardens and saloons and filled the air with after-hours merriment. Built in the heart of a manufacturing district, the settlement eventually was engulfed and largely replaced by factories.

South from Steinway, the LIRR opened its Sunnyside yards on a previously barren, mosquito-infested tract in 1910. The building boom that followed took the form of English Tudor-style, semi-detached homes and apartment buildings, with shared yards in back and small, shrub-dotted plots in front. The style of development reached its pinnacle in 1924 when the New York City Housing Corporation opened Sunnyside Gardens, a seventy-acre planned community of one-, two-, and three-family houses and apartment buildings.

In the central Queens region now called Forest Hills, the Russell Sage Foundation purchased 175 acres on which it constructed a model workers' community in 1909. Built in the fashion of Ebenezer Howard's English Garden Cities, the homes were Tudor-style, with siting and ground design planned by Frederick Law Olmsted. But Forest Hills, an undeveloped area called Whitepot until a real estate developer renamed it around 1900, was not destined to be a blue-collar neighborhood. Russell Sage turned the completed garden community over to a residential corporation which chose to open it up to prosperous white-collar residents.

The model English suburb, re-created and adapted in Sunnyside and Forest Hills Gardens, surfaced again in Richmond Hill, which was built to resemble its London namesake, and in Kew Gardens, a development of the late 1940s.

Beginning in 1913, the cornfields of Jackson Heights sprouted another model community in western Queens. To lure professional, middle-class homebuyers to these then unsettled parts, the developers assembled an array of amenities – self-service elevators, dinettes, off-street parking, indoor solariums, courtyards and

Courtesy The Queens Historical Society

In 1909, the Russell Sage Foundation built a model workers' community of Tudor-style homes. Pictured here in 1940, Forest Hills has retained that character.

greenswards, a golf course, tennis courts – and offered the apartments for sale as cooperatives. By 1930, Jackson Heights had spread over 100 city blocks, much of the original planned open space had been built upon, and Jackson Heights was both the largest cooperative apartment community in the world and the fastest growing community in America. Though it was originally advertised as a restricted (to WASPs) community, Jackson Heights, began to attract Jews and Italians in the late thirties and, particularly, after World War II.

Courtesy The Queens Historical Society

Jackson Heights offered apartments for sale as cooperatives. "The Chateau" garden apartments (above) were part of the development that help spread Jackson Heights over 100 city blocks making it the fastest growing community in America in 1930.

As in Brooklyn and the Bronx, development in Queens accelerated during the housing boom of the 1920s. The opening of elevated lines from Manhattan during the late twenties, the construction of the Independent (IND) subway line during the 1930s, and preparations for the 1939-40 World's Fair fueled expansion. Growth was strongest in the western sections and along transportation lines, such as in Jamaica. Further east, in areas that rapid transit had not reached, development was more hesitant. In fact, there were fewer than a hundred families living east of the Utopia Parkway line before 1930. In Maspeth, however, where the 1910 opening of the LIRR tunnel had ignited development, residential patterns already were firmly established by the 1930s. Small homes, many of them brownstones, lined the streets, housing Irish, Germans, Italians, Poles, and other Eastern European immigrants.

Meanwhile, rapid growth in Jackson Heights spilled into neighboring East Elmhurst and Corona, where Italian immigrants moved into one- and two-family homes. Nearby, industrial Astoria had filled up by the 1930s. Queensborough Houses, a 3,000-family, low-rise project development, opened on the Astoria border in 1939. While this project greatly increased the area's population and significantly altered its ethnic mix, it was located away from the central neighborhood and therefore the basic character of the Astoria area was left intact.

Booming, once transit lines made it accessible to Manhattan offices after 1910, Jamaica doubled its population between 1920 and 1930. After the IND opened its subway line in 1937, growth proceeded at an even faster pace, bringing not only a larger residential population (housed more and more often in apartment towers and complexes), but industrial and commercial development as well. Growth spilled over into neighboring communities, with wealthier residents settling in Jamaica Estates, and Germans, Italians, and Irish moving into South Jamaica and Springfield Gardens.

After World War II, a great demand for new housing, the increase in auto use reflected and encouraged by borough-wide highway building, and Federal policies that encouraged suburban-style growth, opened up Queens for rapid and rampant development. As in previous boom times, much of the new housing was clustered in planned developments and apartment complexes. Parkway Village was opened in 1948 to house United Nations personnel then working in nearby Flushing Meadow. Pomonok Houses offered 2,071 units of public housing in 1952. Electchester Apartments opened in 1955 as cooperative housing for members of the Electrical Worker's Union. And Rochdale Village, a 20-building development of the United Housing Foundation, was opened near Jamaica in 1965. Long-praised as one of the nation's most successful integrated

housing developments, it survived despite some early reluctance by white tenants to settle in an area that was already predominantly black.

Other new housing, built in the borough's farthest reaches, followed highway access and took the shape of suburban single-family home development, attracting a population of second and third generation, middle-class whites. Often the rapidity of development outpaced the provision for services, thus straining water and sewer lines as well as relations with old-time residents who recalled a serene and rural past.

As development spread and vacant land became scarce, older neighborhoods began to deteriorate. Housing stock was aging; new populations were moving in; old-time residents were moving out – sometimes to better quarters, but often out of racial fear. Still, in recent years, Queens – newer, more suburban, and more middle-class than any of the city's boroughs besides Staten Island – has remained stable. Though vacant land is scarce, development continues, much of it taking the form of infill housing and high-rise apartments.

Older areas such as Astoria, Elmhurst, Jackson Heights, and Woodside have seen some deterioration and, with it, growing social problems. But these communities have retained strong social and organizational structures that help hold them together. Astoria, long a stepping-stone community for new immigrant groups, has well-established and stable Italian and Greek populations. Long Island City, located to the south of Astoria, is one of the city's most vibrant industrial areas and therefore continues to provide jobs for area residents. With its sizable Irish community, Woodside has an active and energetic local development organization which monitors change in the neighborhood and works for economic stability. Drawing on their density and urbanity as well as their proximity to Manhattan, Jackson Heights, Hunter's Point, and Elmhurst have begun to attract a gentry population as well. Jackson Heights has also been a magnet community for new Hispanic immigrants from Panama, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and, particularly, Colombia. So large is the area's Colombian population, that the neighborhood has been dubbed "El Chapinero," after a Bogota suburb.

Courtesy The Queens Historical Society

Typical homes in Kew Gardens, a 1940s development.

Between the World Wars, the Rockaways became a popular middle-class vacation spot. Below are two postcards from Rockaway Beach.

Courtesy The Queens Historical Society

Courtesy The Queens Historical Society

Flushing, located at a major transportation node and still a commercial center for northeast Queens, has continued to grow rapidly. Its streets are lined with development-style, single-family homes and mid- and high-rise apartment houses. Its population is now as diverse and ethnically mixed as in any New York City neighborhood, with a particularly large and growing representation of Koreans. Local stores and restaurants reflect the demands of that population in their merchandise and offerings, and the name of a local housing development, "Seoul Plaza," reflects the population size.

But, Jamaica, the borough's other traditional center, has been beset by problems. Its population, primarily black and low-income, is housed in aging, deteriorating structures. Social problems are of increasing concern. Its commercial center, long one of the city's preeminent shopping districts, has fallen on hard times. Despite efforts by city agencies and a local development corporation to revitalize the business area – through the constructing of street malls and the demolition of the unsightly and shadow-casting elevated line that ran above Jamaica Avenue—downtown Jamaica has continued to lose business to newer, nearby, enclosed shopping malls in Queens and across the Nassau County line. Though the stores in central Jamaica continue to serve the local population, the economic base has been undercut severely with the recent closing of two of its three department stores, including Gertz, which led off Jamaica's economic growth when it opened in 1911.

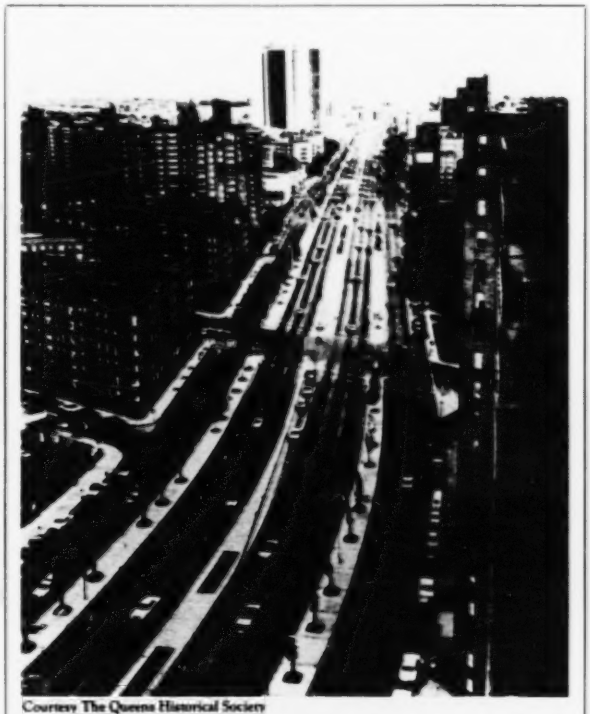
Outside of Jamaica, areas such as St. Albans and Hollis, which once served as Jamaica suburbs, have held their own and remained stable, low-density neighborhoods. Today, their residents are primarily middle-class blacks. Nearby Laurelton and other newer communities have developed as models of relatively successful middle-class integration, housing blacks and whites together in a suburban setting within the city borders.

Along the coast, the Rockaways were fashionable resorts when access was easy only for the affluent. When summer excursion service was initiated on the Cross Bay Railroad in 1898, Queens beaches became more widely popular. Bungalows were built. Mansions and luxury hotels near Neponsit and Belle Harbor were turned into rooming houses. Working fathers commuted to the beaches on summer weekends to visit their vacationing families. Between the World Wars, the Rockaways prospered as popular resorts. New bridge connections and the development of Jacob Riis Park on the peninsula's western tip brought more sun seekers as hotels and bungalows were built throughout Far Rockaway.

Since World War II, however, the peninsula has been in decline. While residential Neponsit and Belle Harbor have remained expensive, exclusive, and well-maintained, the resort areas have declined as air travel and increased auto use made newer, more distant resorts accessible. Built for summertime use, abandoned bungalows were enlisted to house refugees from urban renewal projects year-round. Social problems increased; hotels closed; permanent residents fled; and landlords welcomed welfare tenants to fill their vacant rooms. Large public housing projects were built on cleared land to accommodate the new population. The effect of this progression was spiralling and became self-perpetuating. The Rockaways became a depressed community, housing the elderly and the poor. However, Riis Park, recently taken over by the National Park Service, is still more difficult to reach by public transportation and remains a pleasant day-trip destination. And Breezy Point, a former summer colony, was winterized largely by summer residents and converted to a restricted-access cooperative community.

Courtesy The Queens Historical Society

Queens Boulevard, 1903.



Courtesy The Queens Historical Society

Queens Boulevard, 1971.

Queens does exhibit a wide range of social and urban problems. Its development has been uneven, spotty, sprawling, and relatively unplanned. Many of its older communities are decaying, victims of both age and urban flight. Many of its new neighborhoods suffer from insufficient service provision and ecological deterioration. Its roads are pitted and crowded, and its subway lines are jammed. Still, on balance, Queens is relatively stable and even growing. It serves as a stepping stone for immigrant groups, a way station for the suburban-bound middleclass, a suburban-like alternative for those who find life outside the city borders too distant or expensive, and, to a growing extent, as an urban alternative to expensive, yet nearby, Manhattan. Despite their often sprawling disconnectedness, the neighborhoods of Queens often present distinctive and

ethnically defensive personalities. Residents are more likely to call their particular neighborhood home than to say they hail from Queens. Indeed, the postal service has institutionalized many neighborhoods in its postal zoning nomenclature.

Despite its stability and sense of place, Queens has been as fluid a sea of communities as any part of New York City. Some of its neighborhoods are too new to have seen much change. But most have already been through several incarnations – brought on by changing ethnic ingredients in neighborhood population, by changing transportation patterns and accessiblity, by changing attitudes about the values and virtues of proximity to the central city, by changing opportunities beyond the city borders, and by developmental pressures that have replaced farms with houses and houses with apartment towers. Few Queens residents of 20 years ago will testify to neighborhood stability. Change has been too dynamic and too pervasive. But, in the world of New York City neighborhoods, that is the order of things.

STATEN ISLAND

In many ways, Staten Island is New York's forgotten borough. Geographically separate from the rest of the city, it often seems to be a spiritual cousin to New Jersey, only a narrow stretch of water away. In fact, its connection to New York is a historical accident for the island was ceded to New York as a prize in a sailing contest sponsored by the Duke of York in 1687.

Until recently, geographic factors kept the island isolated and therefore relatively undeveloped. Before 1964, access to Manhattan was possible only by ferry from Manhattan or by bridge from New Jersey. If the Island had been part of New Jersey, it might have been developed earlier as an extension of Bayonne or another neighboring town. But administrative constraints prevented that, and the island remained undisturbed, its land largely unused except for small towns, a few resort areas, and a cluster of growth around North Shore industries and the ferry terminal at St. George.

In this environment, Staten Islanders maintained stronger ties to their own towns and to the island as a whole than to the city across the bay of which they were technically a part. Indeed, they saw their salvation in resisting the City, in holding their own against it. For its part, the rest of the City hardly knew the island existed. In 1964, New York City opened the Verrazano Narrows Bridge which connected Staten Island and Brooklyn. With a new frontier suddenly so close at hand and with the need for new frontiers quite pressing, development soon ensued and new settlers poured over the bridge and changed the rugged face of the island forever.

The new settlers were often blue collar workers, former residents of ethnic neighborhoods such as Bay Ridge in Brooklyn. The new developments generally featured tract homes and planned unit developments (PUDs) where apartments and townhouses were clustered around open central spaces. Much of the housing was quickly and poorly built. Sewers and roads often were added later, and services often were strained. But houses kept going up. And residents, fleeing social ills in Brooklyn or seeing a chance to afford the American Dream, kept coming.

As suburban style "instant communities," these new neighborhoods had few historical roots to draw on. Though they were living on land that had old community affiliations, many new residents chose to identify not with the historical communities, but with their own new developments, taking the place names provided by real estate entrepreneurs rather than by old-time settlers. Such rampant growth long had been feared by Staten Islanders. Various unrealized plans had preceded and predicted the construction of the bridge. As development went on, overrunning rural land, straining services, and draining city dollars from other island uses, resentment surfaced. Old timers, who lived mainly along the North Shore, began to see South

Shore residents in the same light in which they once had viewed Manhattanites.

Some of this North Shore resentment was fostered by deteriorating conditions in the old communities. Stapleton, for example, had been a large German settlement during the late nineteenth century with a growing beer industry and an active port. It held its own during the first half of this century, capitalizing on its status as a free port during the 1930s. But since World War II, the community has been in decline. Its breweries have closed; its industries have moved; its port activities have been usurped by the new containerport at Howland Hook on the island's west shore; and its skies have been clouded by pollution from nearby New Jersey industries. As the decline progressed, residents moved out. The story followed the plot outlined in other urban communities. Those who could left early. In their absence, large homes and mansions were cut up into apartments and rooming houses; low-income residents were encouraged to move in to fill vacancies; other middle-class residents fled in fear; businesses followed; and crime increased as deterioration advanced.

With hard times upon them, Stapleton residents regrouped and tried to stem the tide. To an extent they and their counterparts in other long-established North Shore communities, such as St. George, have been successful. Towards this end they have been assisted by a new group of settlers, "gentry" types – artists, professionals, stockbrokers – who find the community, its history, and its housing stock appealing and affordable.

Staten Island still is a forgotten borough. Manhattan-oriented New Yorkers still are prone to dismiss it as merely the turnaround point on a scenic harbor cruise or as a land of tract houses. But the communities of Staten Island have experienced much change

Courtesy The Bettman Archive

An 1861 Currier and Ives lithograph of Staten Island and the Narrows.

Courtesy The Bettman Archive

Once quiet and undisturbed, homes and neighborhoods in Staten Island changed rapidly and not always positively in the last 20 years.

Courtesy New York State Department of Commerce

The Verrazano Narrows Bridge opened in 1964 bringing a rush of new settlers to Staten Island seeking the American Dream.

and growth since 1964. New communities have sprung up; old communities have fallen apart and, often, have been redefined. Constant change is the essence of New York City neighborhood life. And, though it has long resisted inclusion in the urban fabric, Staten Island has been no exception.

CONCLUSION

In periods of both growth and decline, New York has been a city of constant change. Local, national, and world economies, as well as forces of development, progress, and even retrenchment have molded and remolded the city. The boundaries of that "last frontier," that distant open hinterland, have been crossed — over and over again. Residential neighborhoods have turned industrial and become residential once again. Enclaves for the wealthy have become warrens for the poor and then been refurbished to house the middle class. Immigrants who first established their roots in neighborhoods they later outgrew have pushed on to greener pastures, leaving the communities that nurtured them to nurture other groups.

Few of the many communities that comprise this city have witnessed any degree of long-term stability. This remains true despite the efforts and conservatism of neighborhood residents who, unless they're in the vanguard of settlers or decampers, generally want their communities, their turf, to stay fixed in time. But no neighborhood lasts forever. Given the need for both municipal and personal change and growth in a city the size and scale of New York, it is unreasonable and even unproductive to assume otherwise. Forces of change will take their courses; there is a limit to the effectiveness of any sort of intervention.

Still, for the time it lasts, the neighborhood serves an important function. It provides a base, a turf, a sense of identification for its residents. And it defines a certain stage in the history of the city. Indeed, it makes the City the city that it is.